









**Hack 1: Meet Me in the Cloud**

**Replace Meetings with a Backchannel and a Bin**

“Time is what we need most but what we use worst.” William Penn

Meetings aren’t really being discarded; they’re simply being moved to a different environment, one that doesn’t require your physical presence.

Here’s how it works: Suppose you are in charge of an upcoming meeting. Your first step is to write an agenda. Instead of creating it on a desktop computer, construct it in a folder in whatever cloud storage system you choose. This folder is a bin. Invite collaborators to initial agenda. As “meeting” date approaches, add other items to the big--things that would normally be on a handout. If you want participants to read an article or watch a video, simply add links to agenda. If there are questions that need to be discussed, indicate this in the agenda. When all the documents are ready, send a link to the bin to all meeting participants, giving them a date for completion.

Meanwhile, establish a backchannel, so all meeting participants can easily interact with one another. A backchannel is a discussion platform that allows for back-and-forth conversation between multiple parties (Voxer and TodaysMeet). The discussions can take place in a whole-group chat and in small groups for more specific topics. Launch the “meeting” by delivering opening remarks and announcements in the whole-group chat, sort of like a brief keynote address.

Then, over the next few days, participants access the bin at a convenient time, following the instructions in the agenda and completing whatever tasks are assigned to them by the completion date. For discussion items, participants will talk either in the whole- or small-group chats.

When the completion date arrives, close the “meeting” with some final remarks on the whole-group chat, letting everyone know what was decided and what documents are available in the bin for further reading or downloading.

A BLUEPRINT FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Explain Meeting in the Cloud: Inform participants that you want to build more time into teachers’ work days and take advantage of the power of cloud-based learning.
2. Offer professional development for any cloud-based communication systems. Use YouTube videos.
3. Create subgroups. Set up one “All Staff” folder in the bin and one “All Staff” chat group on the backchannel; then create separate subgroups and subfolders for departments.
4. Start small: pilot just a few items and gradually work up to whole meetings.
5. Moderate the backchannel, and keep your bins tidy.
6. Establish deadlines and accountability. Plant a few treats that reward those who read carefully: “The first five people who e-mail with the subject line ‘Parking’ will get to use a premium parking spot next week.”

**Hack 2: Pineapple Charts**

**Boost Teacher Collaboration with a Public Chart of “Open Door” Lessons**

“Alone we can do so little’ together we can do so much.” Helen Keller

The Problem: little to no peer observation

The Hack: Post a calendar of “open house” lessons

When other teachers see something on the board, they know they have explicit permission to stop by that class during that period to informally observe. They can stay as long as they like--even just a few minutes--and when they’re ready to go, they go. That’s the end: no paperwork, no post-observation conference, just a visit to see what’s going on in other classrooms.

A BLUEPRINT FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Set the stage: Be clear that this is nothing like formal observations. The point is to encourage everyone to share their ideas and practices with others.
2. Create the chart.
3. Recruit early adopters--one group to open their classrooms and another group committed to visiting and talking the visits up with colleagues.
4. Encourage others to participate. After the first wave has passed, it may be necessary to gently push others to join in. Although participation should be strictly optional, if you hear about a teacher who is trying something new, suggest that she add the lesson to the chart.
5. Make room for reviews. This can take many forms. “Really enjoyed watching students play with Kahoot in Mr. Bowen’s class today.” You could reflect in the cloud or create a spreadsheet of expertise.
6. Incentivize it: 10 visits=time off bus duty

**Hack 9: The Glass Classroom**

**Put Learning on Display with Social Media**

The Problem: What Happens in Class Stays in Class

The Hack: Build a transparent classroom with social media

A BLUEPRINT FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Choose a platform for your social channel. Pick one. Don’t try to do all of them when you begin. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Edmodo. Pick one and launch it. Use privacy settings according to school policy.
2. Define your content. Talk with students. What should be shared? How often? Let students have ownership.
3. Set guidelines. What rules should be implemented to ensure your channel is a place where learning is celebrated. Establish norms.
4. Educate stakeholders--administrators and parents. Perhaps an online video or a workshop.
5. Secure permissions. If channel is public, be sure parents have opportunity to opt children out.
6. Start sharing. Set up a schedule and stick to it. Into channel include links to channel in newsletters and email.
7. Be vigilant. Set up notifications. Make your own voice heard on a regular basis.
8. Expand to other platforms.

From Hacking Education: 10 Quick Fixes for Every School by Mark Barnes and Jennifer Gonzalez